

## *Creating Exhibit Entries*

Exhibits are designed to display visual and written information on topics in an attractive and understandable manner. They are similar to exhibits found in a museum. People walking by should be attracted to an exhibit's main idea and, therefore, stop to learn more about the topic. To be successful, an exhibit must create an effective balance between visual interest and historical explanation.

The most common form of exhibit entry is a three-panel display. This style is the least complicated to design and build but is still a very effective way to present information.

Here are some tips for this style:

- Be sure the title is the main focus of the center panel.
- Use the center panel to present the main ideas.
- The side panels are best used either to compare issues about the topic or to explain related detail.
- Artifacts or other materials may also be placed on the table between the side panels.

[Word limit Rule - examples of what is student composed.](#)

### **Labeling**

The labels used for the title and main ideas are very important because they direct the viewer's eye around the exhibit. One way to make labels stand out is to have the writing on a light-colored piece of paper with a darker background behind it. This can be done with construction paper, tag board, or mat board. Dark black lettering makes labels easier to read.

Photographs and written materials will also stand out more if they are placed on backgrounds.

### **Exhibit Design**

Although students will be able to explain their exhibits during the initial judging, a successful exhibit must be able to explain itself. This makes it important to design an exhibit so that the photographs, written materials, and illustrations are easy to understand.

It is always tempting to put as much onto the panel boards as possible, but this usually makes for a cluttered and confusing display. Students should try to select only the most important items for their exhibit boards. Clarity and organization are the most important goals for an exhibit.

### **Exhibit Design Guidelines**

These two hand-outs illustrate the importance of design in the creation of a National History Day exhibit.

[Orientation, Segmentation and Explanation](#) addresses overall exhibit design and [Levels of Text](#) demonstrates the importance of titles and font size in clear exhibit design.

### **Three-Dimensional Exhibits**

A three-dimensional exhibit is more complicated to construct but can be especially effective in explaining themes in which change over time is important. As in the three-panel display, one side should contain the title and main idea. As viewers move around the exhibit the development of the topic can be explored. It is not necessary for the exhibit itself to be able to spin. It may be set on a table (or on the floor) so that people can walk around it.

# Elements of an Effective Exhibit

## Orientation

Make sure the title and subtitle of the exhibit are prominent features of the design.

Make the main idea or thesis clear to the viewer.

## Segmentation

Organize the exhibit into subtopics.

Use design elements to make subtopics clear to viewer.

## Explanation

Use clear and concise captions and text to:

1. Identify pictures, objects, or documents, or
2. Interpret information for the viewer.

## Levels of Text:

*Introduction to the use of labels on historical displays*

# A TOWN BUILT ON IRON

*The main title introduces the topic and attracts viewer interest*

## *"The Evolution of Hibbing, Minnesota, 1880 - 1980"*

*The subtitle focuses the topic and limits what the project will interpret*

### Moving the Town

*A subject label breaks down the topic into smaller parts for explanation and organization. These labels guide the viewer around the display.*

The original townsite of Hibbing was located over a rich lode of iron ore. Because the ore was more valuable than the town, the buildings of Hibbing were moved to a new site in 1919.

*Captions are the most detailed label and provide the opportunity for interpretation. These should be short, active, and clear.*